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ABSTRACT

The manual presents an overview of the career development process for college students with language learning disabilities (LD). A systematic problem solving process is advocated beginning with job selection and preparation and continuing through retirement. Such a process can help the LD adult to identify personal strengths and weaknesses, investigate job opportunities, match personal strengths with job demands, select appropriate preparation programs, and pursue progressive career achievement. Suggestions are for employment interviews and understanding one's rights regarding employment discrimination. Three appendixes include information on a pre-employment inquiry quiz and campus and off-campus resources for career-life planning. (CL)

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Postsecondary Intervention Model for Learning Disabilities
Barkley Memorial Center
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

CAREER DEVELOPMENT FOR PERSONS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

(Prepared with funds from the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, U.S. Department of Education - Grant #G008435130)

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Study Manual #5
April, 1987

For PS IM LD

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CAREER DEVELOPMENT FOR PERSONS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

Career development is an ongoing process which evolves through recognizable stages. These stages involve exploration, establishment, maintenance, and eventual retirement. Success in a career becomes contingent on the completion of a variety of tasks within each stage. These tasks include: career selection, preparation, employment seeking, adapting to an organization, retaining employment, and advancement. It is important to recognize "career" as a path, rather than an end product. Webster (1983) is helpful in establishing this concept with the following definition:

> career: a course or passage which involves consecutive, progressive achievement.

This paper will focus on the initial stage of career development referred to as exploration. Discussion will center on the tasks of selection and preparation as they occur within a postsecondary setting and lead to the second stage of career development which is establishment. Three areas where career development activities occur include: the home, the community, and the school or workplace (Meers, G., Personal communication, Summer, 1985). As one approaches adulthood, often formal school and employment activities occur concurrently or during alternating periods of time. In addition, the training which is received in the school and workplace might function as the primary source of formal training for careers within the home and community. As school and work careers are being merged, individuals must remember that <u>all</u> of life is influenced by work-related career choices and these choices also are influenced by careers within the home and community.

The school and work career selection and preparation efforts of learning disabled (LD) college students are similar to the efforts expended by other college students. However, there are important considerations in career

planning that are influenced by the presence of a learning disability. These considerations may maximize the effectiveness of career preparation efforts.

For all individuals, success in employment and career activities is dependent upon the skills, knowledge, and interests one acquires from a variety of life experiences. Classroom activities alone are only one aspect of preparation for employment. The tasks of career selection, preparation, seeking, adapting, retention, and advancement each are influenced by the factors which are outlined on the following pages. This information is intended to assist and encourage the learning disabled (LD) student to seek a variety of experiences which will promote the best use of personal attributes and strengths in an employment setting.

In examining stages of career development, it may be helpful to know that one's career develops within a predictable pattern. David Osipow (1983) has described a three stage model of career development. Osipow calls those stages "fantasy," "tentative", and "realistic."

The "fantasy" stage of career development may occur without conscious personal awareness. This is the stage that often is seen when small children play 'fire fighter', 'law officer', 'nurse', or 'soldier'. During this stage, many children do things in play that reflect the occupations of parents or their favorite television personalities. At this stage, children have little awareness that the range of jobs available to them is much wider than the options they see daily.

"Tentative" career development begins in early adolescence when young people begin to experiment with actual work roles. Progress in this stage is influenced by opportunities to help with home or school chores, to have paper routes, or to belong to clubs that explore activities and provide experience,

such as scouting. Deliberate future planning and increasing maturity are obvious influences in the selection of these activities.

The final stage of initial career choice is "realistic." This stage often is reached when an individual completes high school. During this stage, clubs, coursework, or employment which a person chooses may show evidence that the final "realistic" stage of career development has begun. This stage continues until a specific career direction has been established (Osipow, 1983).

As one approaches and enters the "realistic" stage of career planning, he or she needs to begin using critical problem-solving skills. The task of career selection requires information gathering, prioritizing, synthesis, and utilization of information. The use of critical problem-solving provides a systematic approach so that career selection is intentional and well planned.

Deliberate career selection sets the stage for the task of preparation. Good planning during the selection and preparation stages provides opportunities to investigate work settings and activities and encourages the use of problem-solving. The key to effective career selection and preparation for anyone is to depend upon one's personal strengths when possible and to minimize reliance upon areas of individual weakness to accomplish the tasks required in a particular employment situation. The University of Nebraska Counseling Center (see Appendix) is one resource for assisting students in assessment of their strengths and weaknesses specific to various vocational settings. When strengths are well matched to job requirements, the potential for success is increased. When tasks and talents are not well matched, skill weakness may interfere with job opportunities and performance. For example, a person who has difficulty with listening comprehension, or understanding what others say, probably would have difficulty in a job that requires extensive

telephone use and the relaying of messages to others. As another example, someone who has difficulty with organization, grammar, and spelling when writing may be excessively challenged in a job where extensive spontaneous writing is required.

Gathering specific information about job requirements during the career preparation step will assist an individual in identifying areas of potential skill weaknesses. This investigation may lead an individual to discover specific areas of personal effectiveness as well as areas of inhibited performance that might be affected by one's particular learning disability. It is very important for learning disabled persons to be certain that their skills are compatible with their career aspirations and interests. Whether making an initial career choice or a career change, it is essential to ask this question: "How will having a learning disability affect career preparation, attainment of needed training, and successful employment?" It is possible that a learning disability may either restrict or enhance career options. A learning disability may contribute to the development of increased personal strengths such as empathy, persistence, or increased motivation. Research data and examples can illustrate the "mixed bag" of traits, both positive and negative, which may be associated with learning disabilities.

Many famous people who are (or have been) successful in their careers also have experienced a learning disability. The following sample of successful persons who have learning disabilities clearly demonstrates that a learning disability need not restrict one's opportunities for a successful career. For example, Henry Winkler who played "The Fonz" on Happy Days is learning disabled. He has produced a film-strip for ACLD on the subject. Olympic athlete Bruce Jenner has dyslexia. Others who have experienced

learning disabilities include Agatha Christie, George Patton, Woodrow Wilson (Hinds, 1985), and Cher Bono (ACLD 1985 Award Winner).

Individuals with learning disabilities have succeeded in many different careers, in part by capitalizing on their strengths and talents in other areas of their lives. A learning disability should not be considered detrimental to career satisfaction. However, employment and effective career advancement may be at risk if the learning disability is not identified and compensated for during selection and preparation stages. People with learning disabilities:

1) can have successful careers.
2) need to utilize effective problem-solving to best plan and achieve satisfying careers.
3) face problems in career choices and change similar to others.
4) are at risk for less satisfying careers unless "realistic" planning and preparation is completed.

Among the factors contributing to job dissatisfaction for people with learning disabilities are frequent job changes, unskilled employment, low wages, and social problems related to communication difficulties (Blalock, 1982; Polloway, Smith and Patton, 1984; and White, Deshler, Shumacher, Warner, Alley, & Clark 1983). Information from a study conducted by Otfried Spreen, reported at the 34th Annual Conference of the Orton Society in 1983, further described employment characteristics of LD adults. Spreen followed a group of 34 learning disabled individuals for a period of ten years. These students were initially tested between the ages of 8 and 12 and were interviewed again at the ages of 18 and 25. At the age of 18, 75% of those interviewed were employed. At the age of 25, only 50% of the interviewed subjects were employed. These statistics taken alone are discouraging; however, an objective view of the employment situation for learning disabled individuals will show evidence of both bad news and good news. The number of learning

disabled individuals now entering college, with the assistance of programs specifically designed to make postsecondary settings accessible to learning disabled students, is indicative of a strong belief on the part of national special interest groups that many learning disabled individuals are capable of successful college experiences. The skills learned through support programs at colleges and universities most likely will have a positive influence on job performance. The coping strategies used to succeed in college should be easily transferable to the responsibilities of employment. In addition, professional services are available to students to provide advice and guidance through the initial tasks in carreer development.

In spite of the potential employment problems for learning disabled persons, they, like others, have a wider range of available opportunities and more varied long-term career patterns than ever before. Reports from the last census indicated 40,000 different job titles in existence (ERIC/CAPS Fact Sheet, 1984). In addition to a wide variety of jobs to choose from, periodic job change is becoming the rule rather than the exception for all. Today's workers are much less likely to remain at one job as long as members of the work force who are currently nearing retirement. Persons who do not experience learning disabilities or other employment-related problems are as apt to have frequent career changes as individuals who report employment-related problems. This trend makes awareness of career selection and change processes significant for everyone. Maturing adults proceed through change and growth stages as they are confronted with various life events and needs for career change. People just leaving college are often surprised to realize that career choice and change may occur several times in life. Dr. Gary Meers (Personal communication, Summer, 1985), Head of the Special Vocational Needs Division at UNL, has indicated that persons in the

general population are likely to change jobs as often as nine times in their lives. Actual changes in career direction may occur four or five times and changes of assignment within the same field may occur an equal number of times.

It has been found that those with employment-related difficulties often make more frequent, less satisfying changes. However, use of a systematic decision making process can promote a more positive transition through career selection or change. The process of career change begins with making another career selection. In fact, career problem solving is a circular process that is repeated as often as necessary throughout the lifespan of a person.

By answering the following questions, one can ensure that all of the steps necessary for decision making have been considered as one moves through the various stages of career development.

"STEPS FOR SUCCESSFUL PROBLEM SOLVING"

1) What is the problem—the decision to be made?

2) What do you know about yourself—your values, what's important to you, your interests, and abilities, etc.?

3) What solutions are possible?

4) Collect information about each alternative.

5) Predict the possible outcomes of each alternative.

6) Eliminate any alternatives you estimate to have undesirable outcomes. If necessary, repeat steps 4 and 5.

7) Evaluate the remaining alternatives.

8) Make the decision.

(Callone, P. R., Bother, B., Garvey, G. "Have It Your Way")

Answers to questions 1 and 2 should assist in narrowing one's field of career choices. Once a specific career area or set of job titles is identified, the next step as indicated in question 3, is to gather information in order to compare a specific job opening to other positions. Volunteer work, internships, and involvement in professional associations will provide an inside look at the range of responsibilities for various jobs across settings. A variety of campus and community resources are available (see Appendix) to assist in identifying possible alternatives and reducing the number of choices in specific career areas.

The search for a specific position can begin once a vita or resume have been prepared. The resume (vita) lists and describes educational preparation, previous work experience and skills an individual possesses which might enhance qualification for the position. The resume (vita) and a letter which requests a personal meeting should be mailed to the personnel officer or administrative officer of organizations who have the kind of position desired. After a week or two, a phone call may be placed to that individual(s) to determine if the resume was received and to arrange the personal interview. Sending resumes to prospective employers serves as a formal notification of an individual's interest in a position. Less formal activities may include attending conferences where opportunities are available for meeting people and sharing interests and ideas; or participating in a "job club" which is a support/work group for job searchers (Wheeler, D., Personal communication, January, 1985).

During interviews with prospective employers, it is important that the learning disability be described if the nature of the learning disability could influence work performance. Don't panic; disclosure does not mean defeat. Remember the potential positive outcomes of having a learning

disability and the compensatory techniques used to circumvent LD-related difficulties. One means of introducing strengths to an employer is through use of the Expertness, Attractiveness, and Trustworthiness Model (Kerr, 1985). With this model one can demonstrate to potential employers personal competencies by showing oneself to be Expert. That is, be prepared to discuss personal characteristics and skills related to the job expectations. In this discussion, emphasize the qualities which portray an attractive, likeable, cooperative, potential employee. Communicate to the hiring officer(s) a sense of trustworthiness while providing genuine, honest responses, free from ulterior motives (Kerr, 1985). The Expertness, Attractiveness, and Trustworthiness Model places the weight of responsibility for "managing" the learning disability on the learning disabled individual.

Today's job seeker who has acquired necessary training, seeks employment through the appropriate procedures, and meets all stated qualifications for the position, cannot be discriminated against because of a learning disability unless the disability directly affects the employee's ability to carry out the job responsibilities. Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act specifically provides this protection to specified classes of handicapped individuals in settings which receive any type of federal financial assistance. In addition to Section 504, many states have other safeguards against employment discrimination. Rules, regulations, and laws that protect job seekers and employees differ somewhat from state to state and from company to company. The applicant needs to be knowledgeable of local regulations and sensitive to the possibility, even if unintentional, of discrimination due to a handicapping condition. Discrimination may be evident in employment applications or interviews. The "Pre-Employment Quiz" (Campbell, 1985) illustrates the legality of questions asked during the employment screening

process according to Nebraska guidelines (see appendix). If seeking a job in another state, check with the local Department of Labor to determine local laws and regulations.

In summary, career development for learning disabled adults involves a systematic problem solving process beginning with job selection and preparation and continuing through retirement. The process, if used at various stages of career selection and change, should enable the LD adult to identify personal strengths and weaknesses, investigate job opportunities, match personal strengths with job demands, select appropriate preparation programs, and pursue progressive career achievement. A variety of references have been included in the Appendix to assist the LD adult at each stage of career planning and preparation. A learning disability can contribute rather than limit the success and satisfaction of school and work related careers.

Appendix A

PRE-EMPLOYMENT INQUIRY QUIZ
(Applicable as of September, 1986)

The legal status of questions employers may ask throughout the employee screening process is as follows:

		Legal	Illegal
A)	Their height and weight? (Acceptable only if specific in employment announcement.)		
B)	Their birthplace or the birthplace of their parent?		X
C)	To submit proof of age by supplying birth certificate or baptismal record?		X
D)	To give their religious affiliation, name of church, parish or religious holidays observed?		X
E)	If they are citizens of the United States?	X	
F)	If they are naturalized citizens?		X
G)	For the date when they acquired their citizenship?		X
H)	If they have ever been arrested for any crime, and to indicate when and where?		X
I)	To indicate what foreign languages they can read, write or speak fluently?	X	
J)	How they acquired their ability to read, write or speak a foreign language?		X
K)	About their past working experience?	X	
L)	If they are Mrs., Ms. or Miss?		X
M)	For their maiden name?		X
N)	What their plans for child care are?		X
O)	If they plan to have more children?		X
P)	For a list of all clubs, societies, and lodges to which they belong?		X
Q)	To include a photograph with their application for employment?		X

From: Richard Campbell, Nebraska Department of Vocational Education, 1985.

Appendix B

University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Campus Resources for Life-Career Planning

I. Functions of Major/Minor Advisor(s) and Department Offices

A. Describe specific course requirements in your chosen field of study.

B. Recommend classes that fit your interests and program requirements.

C. Serve as your advocate regarding needs for reasonable accommodations.

D. Guide you into coursework that will emphasize personal strengths and de-emphasize your learning disability.

E. Has the following written resources available:

1. Publications related to that field of study
2. Bulletin Board Information
3. Job Listings
4. Information about professional clubs and associations

II. Functions of the Counseling Center

A. Offers a course (Educational Psychology 150A and B) for career self-assessment and decision making.

B. Offers individual career counseling.

C. Has SIGI+ (a self-directed computer software program for use by students/adults). SIGI+ consists of nine sections.

1. Introduction
2. Self-Assessment
3. Search
4. Information
5. Skills
6. Preparing
7. Coping
8. Deciding
9. Next Steps

D. Available career interest/vacational inventories

1. Strong Vocational Interest Blank
2. Career Assessment Inventory
(Both must be taken at the Counseling Center and can be interpreted there or at the Educational Psychology Clinic.)

3. John Hollands's Self-Directed Search
4. Myers-Briggs Type Indicator
5. Edwards Personnel Preference Inventory
   (These three can be taken and interpreted at either the Counseling Center or the Educational Psychology Clinic.)
6. Is There Life After Graduation? A Practical Listing of Jobs Classified by Degree Area

III. The Educational Psychology Clinic

Short-term counseling at a small fee per visit.
(Counselors will be supervised M.A. and Ph.D. candidates.)

IV. The Career Planning and Placement Center (CPPC)

Familiarity with services is recommended for students prior to their senior year so students can fully benefit. Services offered at the Career Planning and Placement Center are described in the current issue of the Placement Manual published free of charge each semester. Obtaining a copy as an underclassman would be best. The Career Planning and Placement Center has the following written resources available.

A. Free publications

1. College Placement Annual

   Vol. 1. Self-Assessment
   Vol. 2. Administrative Careers
   Vol. 3. Engineering Careers

2. Placement Manual - Published each semester by the UNL-CPPC.

3. Handouts from workshops and training sessions

4. Career Opportunities Bulletin

B. Publications for a fee

1. Getting Hired - Edward G. Rogers

2. Educational Vacancy Bulletin

C. Services offered

1. Registration

   All alumni, undergraduate, and graduate students at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln are eligible to use the Career Planning and Placement Center. Students are encouraged to register one year prior to the time they expect to seek employment. Early registration is important

as many employers recruit candidates throughout the year. A registration packet includes a Personal Data Sheet, an Academic Record Form, and a Computer Referral Form. This information can be made available to any prospective employer. A student must have completed a registration packet before interviewing on campus or establishing a credentials file. Registration packets are available in the CPPC office. CPPC recommends that each student attend a scheduled orientation session in order to become familiar with the full range of CPPC services.

2. Career Counseling

   The professional staff assists students in achieving career objectives, exploring the full range of employment possibilities, identifying possible employers, and developing effective job hunting skills.

3. On-Campus Interviews

   Registered seniors and alumni have the opportunity to interview with representatives from business, industry, government agencies, and educational institutions who come to the campus each fall and spring semester in search of new employees.

4. On-Campus Interviewing "Updates"

   Interview schedules are printed weekly and copies are available at the CPPC, Room 230 Nebraska Union.

5. Credentials

   Any senior, graduate student, or alumni may establish a credential file. Credentials are made available to employers and are mailed at a nominal fee.

6. Job Vacancy Lists

   In addition to on-campus interviewing many employers prefer to simply list possible job vacancies. A career opportunities bulletin and a teacher vacancy bulletin are produced on a regular basis. Copies and information on subscription are available at CPPC, Room 230, Nebraska Union.

7. Referrals

   Referrals of candidates are made at the request of employers who have positions available.

8. Career Library

General career and occupational information is available to any student or alumni. Literature is provided on private companies, government agencies, and educational institutions. Audiovisual information on corporations and the interview process is also available.

9. Seminars & Workshops

Sessions are conducted each semester on interviewing techniques, preparing resumes and cover letters, and job hunting strategies. Contact CPPC for further details.

10. Graduate & Professional School Testing

Those planning to apply for admission to graduate or professional schools should consult those schools to determine what tests may be required. Most test dates are established by national testing organizations with specific deadlines for registration. Current testing information may be obtained from the CPPC office.

D. Instructions for registering with CPPC

1. Registration with CPPC is necessary for:

a. Participation in on-campus interviewing.
b. Utilization of credential-file services.
c. Participation in the computerized referral service.

2. To register you are required to complete:

a. A Personal Data Sheet.
All persons must submit one original and one copy of this form. If you are planning on participating in on-campus interviewing, YOU MUST SUBMIT 20 COPIES OF THE PERSONAL DATA SHEET AND YOUR ACADEMIC RECORD FORM.
b. A CPPC computer referral form.
c. An academic record form (optional). (SEE ABOVE)
d. An equal opportunity/affirmative action form (optional).

3. Preparing the Personal Data Sheet

CPPC strongly suggests that the basic data form be NEATLY TYPED. Employers will be using this form to initially evaluate you at the on-campus interview and when seeking persons of your background.

4. Preparing the CPPC Computer Referral Form

The computer referral form should be completed utilizing the code sheets enclosed with your registration package.

It is to your advantage to complete all sections on this form.

5. Preparation of the Academic Record Form (Optional)

The academic record form provides employers with a list of specific courses you have taken at UNL and other colleges. The courses should be arranged by subject matter, as it is easier for employers to see courses within specific academic areas. An example of how you might arrange it follows:

Title	Units	Grade
Advertising		
Intro to Comm.	3	A
Retail Advertising	2	B
Math		
Business Math	5	A-
Calculus	5	C+
Algebra	3	B
Phys. Ed.		
Golf	1	A

The academic record form is not an official University transcript. In many cases it will suffice and give employers the information they need. If an official transcript is required, you may obtain one from the Office of the Registration and Records, 107 Administration Bldg. You may not include an official transcript in your credential file.

6. Letters of Reference (Optional)

CPPC offers the service of housing your letters of reference. These letters may be used to support your application for employment when needed. You may obtain blank letter of reference forms at the front counter. Generally three letters of reference, but no more than five, should be obtained. Current legislation requires that all letters of reference remain non-confidential unless you have signed a waiver (see the box at the top of the letter of reference form).

Appendix C

Off-Campus Resources for Life-Career Planning

I. Southeast Community College

A. Offer classes and workshops

B. Have take-home inventories such as:

1. COPS (Interest Measurement)
2. CAPS (Ability Measurement)
3. COPES (Values Measurement)
4. Self-Directed Search - Experience, Skill, and Interest Measurement Inventory

C. Will schedule individual counseling appointments to interpret the assessments.

D. Has three self-directed computer-assisted career exploration systems:

1. Nebraska Career Information System
2. N.C.I.S. Skills Assessment System
3. Discovery System

(Course: Interview with Ron Snyder, S.E.C.C. Counseling Center Director, September 27, 1985).

II. YWCA New Direction Center

Offers counseling, workshops and support groups for women in the midst of job search and career changes (YWCA Winter News, Information and Class Offerings, December, 1985).

III. Written Resources Available from Bookstores and Libraries

A. Books about Career Choices

Richard Bolles
<u>The Quick Job Hunting Map</u>
<u>What Color is Your Parachute?</u>
<u>The Three Boxes of Life (and how to get out of them)</u>
<u>Where Do I Go From Here With My Life</u> (with John Crystal)

John Holland
<u>Making Vocational Choices</u>

Bernard Haldane
"Motivated Skills System" contained in <u>The Guide for Occupational Exploration</u> (U.S. Department of Labor)

[May be photocopied for personal use; it is titled: "Checklist for Occupational Clues."]

B. Concerning Job Search and Interview Techniques.

H. Anthony

Sweaty Palms: The Neglected Art of Being Interviewed,
Is Informational Interviewing Dead?
The So-Called Handicapped Job Hunter
[National Career Development Project of United Ministries in Higher Education (single copies free)]

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